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ABSTRACT

This booklet features the success of New York Public School 129 in conducting its reading program for disadvantaged students. The principal of this Harlem school emphasizes primarily her role as head teacher and assigns a secondary place to her executive functions. Rather than stress such current innovative practices as heterogeneous groupings, individualized instruction, and team teaching, she prefers to maintain a traditional setting with the added belief that love, as a prerequisite to learning, must be given more than lip service. At PS 129 the prevailing philosophy is that a public school should be a place where children can be happy and have fun, and where genuine concern for the children and their parents is paramount. (JF)

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A Report by the Program Reference Service

The Principal As Educator

The Finley School / New York City

Program Analyst:
Colin Greer

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As a unit of the Dissemination Division, the Program Reference Service identified, examined, and provided information on programs in grades K-6 which deal with the problems of urban school systems. Its reports have been designed to meet the stated needs of school administrators and other educational decision-makers, and are offered as informational aids to effective educational planning. This report was prepared under the direction of Joseph Pincus.

November 1970

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In a central Harlem school, PS 129, known as the Finley School, the scores of the pupils on standardized measures of reading achievement match or exceed citywide norms. Observations of its reading program revealed that what was important about PS 129 was not so much its reading program but the way its principal, Mrs. Martha Froelich, functioned. Mrs. Froelich takes her work as head teacher seriously and makes the more "executive" functions of principalship secondary to her role as educator. The reading program is projected by its principal as the instructional leverage for the organization of the school.

If, as has been suggested, elementary school principals determine the shape of elementary education, then the workings of PS 129 represent some of the best in that shape and its shapers. Principals, in the main, are administrators. Mrs. Froelich is, above all, a good teacher and the children at PS 129 respond to her as such.

PS 129 was observed for this report in the early part of 1969, and again in 1970. In the interim, Charles E. Silberman, in Crisis in the Classroom, *(Random House, 1970), reported on the school. The report has attracted widespread attention to it. The observations here are presented to clarify and underscore points of interest.*

At the John H. Finley elementary school, they are still fighting an old but by no means anachronistic battle to prove that love is the mainspring from which academic success and social progress spring forth. With this guiding philosophy, the school is conducting a reading program, the apparent success of which is now arousing interest.

Some think that learning can take place only in a climate of complete change. That belief has been expressed in the mounting critique of public education where the educational deprivation of the black child has been a major concern. Heterogeneous groupings, individualized instruction and team teaching, for example, are some of the tools by which it has been hoped that pupils and teachers can be given sufficient autonomy to gain leverage for learning in the classroom. There are those who have instituted experimental programs which incorporate such suggestions. But there are those, as in PS 129, who appear to be making inroads within the traditional public school setting.

What is outstanding is the way the school principal functions. PS 129 operates on the principle that the public school must be a place where the child can be happy and have fun. This means that love, as a prerequisite to learning, has to be given more than lip service. PS 129 is pervaded by a climate of pleasure and genuine concern for the children and the parents it knows it serves.

Where PS 129 has succeeded, the independent variable seems always to be the concern and direction of its principal, Mrs. Martha Froelich.

Chapter 2

Setting

Special Service school

PS 129 is a Special Service school, as are other schools in the Harlem area. Heavy pupil and teacher turnover, low academic achievement, and large numbers of free lunches are the usual indexes used for "special" status under Board of Education descriptions for "special" funding. The 1,100 children in the six grades in PS 129 (89 percent Negro, 10 percent Puerto Rican, and one percent other) are considered "disadvantaged," according to Board of Education terminology. The staff at PS 129 is intensely aware of the unresolved objectives of the "Special Service" schools. They believe in the ability of PS 129 to deal with the problems. They seek to make things in school good things, and the time spent in school good times. They seem to have established reading drill among the good times and good things.

The school believes in the children's ability to perform well and the children trust the school. School time is conceived of as more than the school day. A great deal of effort is continually being made to create and to maintain links with parents. The teachers are concerned with involving parents. Mrs. Froelich insists on that. She is also sensitive to possible disappointment by the staff in terms of efforts expended. She not only believes that the school can teach children to seek gratification through academic accomplishment, but that the teachers need the gratification of the students' good performance.

The staff of PS 129, from principal to school secretary, prefer to call it the John Finley School.

This preference amounts to an insistance that the school has an individual character, a unique community spirit in which all can participate. There is no reason, Mrs. Froelich says, for the school to conform to the self-fulfilling predictions of sociologists and educators of non-performance by children. Nor should the school lose its identity in an impersonal number. (John Finley was the first president of City College, and PS 129—at 130th Street and Convent Avenue—is considered a public school on the campus.) That is Mrs. Froelich's firm view. In this school, the principal has imposed her view on the traditional public school organization.

Mrs. Froelich has been principal at PS 129 for nine years. According to Mr. Martin Frey, the superintendent of the district in which the school was located, Martha Froelich is the best principal in the district. (Note: PS 129 is now in District 5. Mr. Frey continues as superintendent of District 4.) Parents have made Superintendent Frey aware that they like both the principal and the school. In addition, the reading scores at PS 129 are creditable according to citywide norms, not simply creditable for Harlem.

To the observer who finds himself in the school, PS 129 is indeed a unique place by any traditional public school standards, doing unusual things in an honest effort to help children succeed academically in a school in the inner city. Good reading scores are accompanied by high morale of teachers, counselors, parents, pupils, and even school secretaries.

Reading scores

The reading program is an important part of Mrs. Martha Froelich's efforts to give order and direction to the school. The reading scores at PS 129 have been among the highest in central Harlem for several years in succession. They have been improving steadily, in fact, since Mrs. Froelich came to PS 129. Before the present reading program was initiated, fewer than half of the children in grade 1 were judged able to participate in citywide testing, typically carried out in the first two grades of elementary school. (These include the New York Tests of Growth in Reading and the Metropolitan Achievement Test.) Since the first year of this reading program (1962-63), all PS 129 children have been tested in grade 1 as well as in other grades. Mrs. Froelich maintains, and, in general, test results confirm a fairly consistent record of success on the reading program. In grade 1, since the introduction of the program, there are indications of progress as the program has become increasingly well-established.

Mrs. Froelich has impressed the school with her own methods and emphasis and has stamped her approach into every nook and cranny of the school. She knows what is going on everywhere and that goes hand in hand with knowing everybody in the school—janitors, teachers, aides, and most of all, the children. She always provides a word of acknowledgment, always has a personal connection, is always accessible. But she believes deeply that children, teachers and general staff all need such recognition. Everybody in the school's

community, she says, is the responsibility of the school—not just on school days, but on weekends and vacations, as well. In turn Mrs. Froelich makes it quite plain that everybody, including the parents, is responsible for trying to fulfill the school's academic objectives.

This type of thrust in the PS 129 setting is persuasive. Mrs. Froelich tells observers over and over again that reading scores are only part of what goes on in a school and not always the most important part at that. "Not everybody can read at grade level, you know," she says. Mostly, she believes, the scores have "propaganda" value. However, she has cooperated in the evaluation of the school, and reported on accomplishments reflected in the reading scores. Observers are always welcome visitors to her school. The welcome mat, however, in no way indicated satisfaction. Mrs. Froelich insisted that the school has not even "scratched the surface yet."

Chapter 3

Reading Room

Methods used

In 1962 soon after Mrs. Froelich came to PS 129, she and a teacher from her previous school, Florence Kaiden, introduced a reading program. (An article describing the program appeared in The Reading Teacher, *October 1967.) They started with a pilot class in grade 1, introducing a program they had previously developed. From the outset, the program encompassed more than specific methods for improved reading in the classroom. It concerned itself with the need to involve parents in the reading program, the need to help reluctant or inexperienced teachers in the classroom, and the need to overcome both flabbiness and inflexibility in administration. The focus on the child required that parents and teachers be involved educationally. The aim was to turn the school into a cohesive educational enterprise. In effect, the reading program was used to impose order in the school. It now characterizes the school and provides the basic organization around which continuing and different experimentation can be carried out.*

The Finley reading program began in first grade. (Now, in 1970, it begins in kindergarten.) At the beginning of first grade, reading is introduced through work charts and experience stories.

Work charts

The work charts focus on beginning reading skills and grow out of the workaday formalities of the classroom. (See Figure 1) There are charts for recording attendance, the duties of helpers,

Figure 1

MY DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES

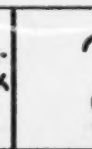
Name: _____

DATE	TEACHER	DAY	FILL IN CIRCLE IF COMPLETED							HOME-WORK
		MON	CLASS ACTIVITY ○	MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SOCIAL STUDIES READ QUESTIONS TOPIC MAP ○	I WAS CURIOUS ABOUT I LEARNED	EXTRA	MON ○	
		TUES	CLASS ACTIVITY ○	MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SOCIAL STUDIES ○	PENMANSHIP ○	I WAS INQUISITIVE TODAY ABOUT	TUES ○	
		WED	CLASS ACTIVITY ○	MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SOCIAL STUDIES ○	CURRENT EVENTS ○	GYM ○	WED ○	
		THURS	CLASS ACTIVITY ○	MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SCIENCE ○	WHY? HOW? WHEN? WHERE?	EXTRA	THURS ○	
		FRI	ASSEMBLY ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	LIBRARY ○	SCIENCE ○	MATH WORKBOOK ○	GYM ○	FRI ○	

THIS WEEK I WAS ESPECIALLY CURIOUS ABOUT:

NEXT WEEK I WOULD ESPECIALLY LIKE TO LEARN:

PONSIBILITIES Name: _____

LE IF COMPLETED				HOME-WORK			I HAVE HAD MY READING CONFERENCE THIS WEEK. ○
MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SOCIAL STUDIES READ QUESTIONS TOPIC MAP ○	I WAS CURIOUS ABOUT I LEARNED	EXTRA	MON ○		I AM KEEPING A CAREFUL RECORD OF MY READING. ○
MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SOCIAL STUDIES ○	PENMANSHIP ○	I WAS INQUISITIVE TODAY ABOUT	TUES ○	EXTRA	I HAVE WRITTEN MY BOOK REPORT FOR THIS WEEK. ○
MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SOCIAL STUDIES ○	CURRENT EVENTS ○	GYM ○	WED ○	MY QUESTION FOR TODAY	MY NOTEBOOK HAS BEEN CHECKED. ○
MATH ○	READING MY OWN BOOK ○	SCIENCE ○	WHY? HOW? WHEN? WHERE?	EXTRA	THURS ○		EXTRA: MY CURRENT EVENTS FOLDER IS UP-TO-DATE ○
READING MY OWN BOOK ○	LIBRARY ○	SCIENCE ○	MATH WORKBOOK ○	GYM ○	FRI ○	I WANT TO KNOW?	MY WORD LIST IS GROWING. ○
							I VISIT MY LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY ○
							EXTRA: I AM USING MY FREE TIME WELL ○

BOUT:

EARN:

PARENT'S SIGNATURE:

special news, the weather calendar, and work-play period assignments. The charts are designed with slots into which children insert prepared slips with the appropriate responses—a word, phrase, a numeral or a picture. In this way, work-study skills and word attack skills, phrases and paragraph comprehension are introduced. Outside every classroom door hangs a hand-made sign. If the class is inside, the sign indicates that and invites entrance. If not, then a message slotted into the sign indicates that "we are on a trip today" or other such messages. Inserting the right signs, after selecting them from a box of signs that have been made to cover all possibilities, is part of the program effort.

The experience story, on the other hand, emanates from the child. The teacher elicits from the children statements which employ children's names and are always grounded in the immediate and the familiar. The teacher writes the story on the chalkboard. At the same time, the vocabulary for the stories is carefully controlled by the teacher and is gradually extended as more and different activities are told by the children. A duplicated copy of his story is given to each child who pastes it in a hard covered notebook. Mrs. Froelich sees each story to be duplicated and okays it. The reading program relates reading to the day-to-day lives of the children. It aims to reflect the student's world and his set of needs. For both work charts and experience stories, children add pictures to illustrate the texts and, later in the year, the copying of the stories affords directed practice in penmanship. For the children who progress more slowly, language games and differentiated teaching techniques take place in special groups during the day with an experienced teacher or a trained volunteer worker. (Mrs. Froelich will allow no untrained volunteers to work with the children.) A great deal of use is made of the chalkboard and of individual slates for developing knowledge of the oral and written language, as well as to practice on word perception skills.

A homework program, "Learning & Loving for Parents and Children," was instituted for kindergarten children last year, continuing this year. This year's first grade teachers have given Mrs. Froelich a favorable feed-back on the children who took part in this program last year. Figure 2, showing a letter dated October 15, explains the procedure somewhat. Figure 3 shows the list used by the kindergarten teachers to evaluate how much the children know when they enter school, to give them a working basis from which to start.

The introduction of book reading in grade 1, as well as the number and level of difficulty of the books read, is tailored to each child's progress. The decision to introduce trade and text books is made for each child individually, based on detailed observations by his teacher, in consultation with the teacher designated as director of the program. A variety of trade and text books is used following a sequence developed in the school. A classification of approximately 300 titles, ranging from the first pre-primer through second reader level and higher, has been prepared, is used by teachers and

Figure 2

The John H. Finley School
P.S. 129 Manhattan
425 West 130th St.
New York, N. Y. 10027

Martha Froelich, Principal

October 15, 1970

Dear Parent:

Some parents were not able to come to our meeting on Friday, October 9, so that we could not tell them about our special plan for this Kindergarten year.

Each Thursday, your little one will come home with a file folder. In it, there will be a homework assignment for the week. Please spend a little time each day to help your child.

Also, please be patient with the mistakes. In the beginning, it won't be perfect! A little praise will make your child feel good and try harder.

Pauline Lermond, Teacher

Frances Irizarry, Teacher

Figure 3

Says FIRST Name	Colors	Ordinal Numbers 1st thru 3rd
Says WHOLE Name	Shapes	Concept First/Last
Address	Counts to 10	Concept More/Less
Apt./Floor	Counts above 10	Concept Big/Small
Telephone #	Quantity Concepts 1-5	Concept Same/Different
Writes FIRST Name	Recognizes Numerals 1-5	Alphabet
Writes BOTH Names	Recognizes Numerals 6,7,8,9,0	

children, and is constantly subject to refinement. The designated levels do not always follow publishers' recommendations but are based on experience in using them with individual children. As a result, the number of books in circulation at Finley is always high. The paraprofessionals who man the reading room are on duty through the school day. On the day the observers were present, more than 300 books were in circulation outside regular class reading assignments. The reading room is not in the school library but in a large closet with many sets of the same books so that many children may read the same titles at the same time.

Children are not hurried from level to level. Provision is made for those children who need slow pacing and intense exposure to a few books at that level, while others may be more rapidly paced according to their individual requirements. Silent reading is encouraged from the very beginning by having each child read a book he can handle independently. Faster-moving children act as what Mrs. Froelich calls "buddies" to help slower classmates with specific word recognition problems.

Worksheets

In an effort to emphasize early independence in learning and good work habits and study skills, worksheets have been developed which test comprehension. The worksheets are introduced with the beginning of book reading. At first, only multiple-choice or "yes-no" responses, involving the circling of answers, are called for. In time, more complicated responses are elicited. These worksheets and the correction sheets which are also provided are used diagnostically by the teacher and program director in order to ascertain the cause of any difficulty.

Individual conferences are held several times a week with all children to check on word recognition of the vocabulary of their silent reading homework assignments, and to encourage children to refer to the worksheets when they have trouble recalling a word in the list. Finally, these worksheets provide a running record of the progress of an individual child through the grades—an essential tool for each new teacher and the program director in establishing ability groups or simply beginning a class at a new grade level at the beginning of a new school year.

Reading wheel

In addition children are encouraged to keep their own records by means of a device called "My Reading Wheel." Each child has a copy of the wheel which is divided into sixteen sections, so that the child can color in the sections appropriate to the reading he has just completed. Mrs. Froelich developed the wheel in order to keep the children constantly aware that reading is a route to all kinds of knowledge and functional uses. The wheel was reported to be very popular with the children. By all accounts, the children at PS 129 are very proud of their reading wheels. (See Figure 4)

THE JOHN H. FINLEY CAMPUS SCHOOL

NAME: _____ CLASS: _____

MY READING WHEEL

Each time you finish a book, color in the section of the wheel that tells what your book was.

On the back of the sheet, write the name of the book and the author.

JK

Figure 4

Grade level scores

The children attending PS 129 come from a neighborhood where children are usually characterized as "unprepared" for standard school situations. For example, the first grade, which was tested in the Fall of 1965, had a median score which fell at the 26th percentile of the New York State Readiness Tests; the first quartile was at the 13th percentile and the third quartile was at the 47th percentile, according to standard norms. Low reading readiness scores notwithstanding, when the same children were tested at the end of grade 1 in the following year, more than three-fourths scored above grade level, according to New York City Board of Education data.

Children in grade 2 were also given the New York Tests of Growth in Reading each year. The median scores have increased consistently since 1963, regularly surpassing the norms for the end of the second grade. Even the performance of children at the lowest end of the range has been brought up to the extent that first quartile scores have been close or equal to the median level of normative populations. Since many of the high achievers attained top scores on Test A, the entire grade has been given the more difficult Test B each year. This grade has indicated continued progress over the years in the top quartile in excess of the ceiling on the less difficult test.

The Metropolitan Achievement Test (reading sub-test) given throughout the city has shown that through 1967-68, second and fifth graders at PS 129 have matched the performance of many of the children not in the black inner city, such as in public schools of the East Midtown and Yorkville districts of Manhattan, Bay Ridge and Bersonhurst areas of Brooklyn or the Sunnyside, Woodside, Jackson Heights and Richmond Hill areas of Queens.

Despite the considerable range which separates children in the lowest quartile from those scoring highest in the standardized tests at PS 129, test scores have been consistently encouraging since the inception of the Finley Reading Program. For this report, based on observations and interviews, the data on reading scores were checked at the Bureau of Educational Research of the New York City Board of Education. The data confirmed the reports in The New York Times of November 2, 1967 and December 2, 1968, that the reading performance of the children at the Finley School compares favorably with the citywide norms.

Chapter 4

Grouping

Although Mrs. Froelich prefers non-ability grouping, the school has heterogeneous grouping only at the first grade level. All of the children who attend the school are tested and programmed accordingly. After first grade, grouping takes place according to reading ability because Mrs. Froelich does not feel that the majority of her teachers can cope with the less traditional forms of organization. She does, however, insist upon flexibility in grouping, as her conference notes to teachers make plain. Movement within classes seems to take place often, and frequently for reasons not connected with ability but, for example, with the matching of pupil and teacher personalities.

Ability grouping

Once ability grouping is begun in second grade according to the reading progress of children, pacing is done by classes, not by individuals. But class organization lines are fluid and children are frequently shifted during the year as their reading performance warrants.

"Streaming" or constant interchanging exists in reading groups. In a recent visit Mrs. Froelich had her secretary read the observer a letter which she had just dictated to the parents of a child who had been advanced to a different reading group. The letter suggested that the parents contact her if there were any questions.

A special class for very bright fourth and fifth grade students was revisited this year. The composition and book reports displayed were all good. There was no reader. Each child was allowed to

choose his or her own books; one book report each week was mandatory. Children visited the school and the local libraries for book selection. The atmosphere was informal; there was a low undercurrent of noise. Each child kept a card file of the books read, listing author, title and date, and indicating his opinion of each book. Originally, the child was supposed to list three new words and their meanings on the reverse side of the card, but this practice now seems to have received less emphasis. Once a week, one of the reading volunteers visited the class and worked with the children on a one-to-one basis on the theory that they needed help as much as the poor reader. The difference was that the volunteer discussed the book with the child, as opposed to explaining it.

Moreover, the difficulty level of the books continued to be differentiated according to the reading ability of the whole class so that a low-achieving class would have read many pre-primers and primers, while a more advanced class omitted these levels and was involved in reading more books at higher levels.

Chapter 5

Principal as Educator

Mrs. Froelich has not stopped being a teacher. She teaches classes to give her teachers time for interviews and free periods. She teaches teachers. In addition she teaches parents, giving demonstration lessons to show parents how in the daily affairs of the home they can encourage their children's reading. In one video-demonstration lesson for parents, Mrs. Froelich plays a grandmother helping a child dress in the morning, encouraging the naming of objects as they are used.

Spontaneous lesson

During an interview, a boy wandered into her office (the door was never shut) because his teacher had sent him to the main office for supplies and the outer office was temporarily unattended. Perhaps he felt more comfortable speaking to Mrs. Froelich. Anyway, he came in. She stopped the interview immediately to ask him if he was all right, if anything was wrong. He explained his task and she apologetically told him that she was being interviewed and could not take time to locate supplies for him. If he gave his name and class, she would send them up shortly. She did not know his name but clearly indicated how much she cared for him. In taking his name she took the opportunity to be a teacher. Suddenly, he was beside her spelling out the letters of his name while she wrote them down in large script. Then he read it over to her. Here was individualized instruction in the principal's office, spontaneous style. The kind of school that makes such encounters possible cannot but be valuable.

This is further apparent in the way in which the handicapped classes in the school are granted care and concern, but at the same time, a significant degree of autonomy. On one occasion, Mrs. Froelich asked a disabled monitor to extend his duties, do an extra little job for her; the request went along with the reminder that he needn't if he found it too much of a bother. He wanted to and hurried to do it. Another time, a teacher of the handicapped class came in, bringing the whole class, to show Mrs. Froelich the fruits of their gardening activities which were also used to improve reading. Mrs. Froelich was enthusiastic and the children responded to her warmth.

Although Mrs. Froelich is easily reached for interviews, her school is not casually open to visitors. She considers it a working institution, open for inspection for limited periods only. For example, there are no afternoon visiting of classrooms and no teacher interviews unless at her invitation. Interview time is limited, but she will even take over a class to make an agreed-upon interview possible. Through this control, Mrs. Froelich aims, in part, to prevent the constant interruption of teachers and children. This approach ensures her that too many interruptions do not occur as is the case in many a "famous school" in the city. No class is bothered more than once by any one visitor. While Mrs. Froelich constantly repeats that there is nothing to be learned from sitting in a classroom, she sees to it that observations are always made at the beginning of a lesson, never in the middle.

It is clear that there are inexperienced teachers here and teachers with other problems, but Mrs. Froelich keeps these problems confined to herself and the teachers concerned. The teacher, she believes, is the key to anything she can achieve at PS 129.

Two reading lessons daily

Mrs. Froelich keeps a careful eye on her teachers and as far as could be determined through scattered and limited interviews, only a few teachers resent this, and then only a little. With respect to the curriculum, Mrs. Froelich is very clear with her teachers. Two lessons every day in all grades are reading lessons—there are no exceptions. "Three-and-a-half hours a day is enough time for a teacher to be creative," she believes. And she expects her teachers to be creative. It is an expectation conveyed to them in frequent grade meetings. Her weekly perusal of lesson plans is thorough enough to include the recommendation of additional books in support of a good idea. And she almost always remembers—at least on any of the days these observers visited—what lessons are going on where. Dissatisfactions are dealt with personally, by talking with the teacher concerned.

Another anecdote is revealing of practice in the school. While Mrs. Froelich and the observers were walking down the second floor corridor, a boy rushed through a pair of swinging doors. He was shocked when he found the principal on the other side of the door. Mrs. Froelich called him over in a sharp voice, asked him why he should

not have done what he did and why it just must not happen again. He answered. But there was no formal punishment. He was sent away with the admonition that he must be more watchful of his own and other people's safety. This was a two-way affair, not just the principal talking, but the student was engaged for those few moments.

Approach to discipline

Mrs. Froelich does not believe in easily administered punishment and clearly distrusts the sense of finality that the formal punishment places on the offending act. This attitude was not popular with all the teachers we spoke to but seemed to be popular with most. A few felt there was no strong central authority they could count on to reinforce their efforts at discipline The result seemed to be a minimum of demonstrative disciplinarians in the school. Mrs. Froelich is aware that teaching is hard for new teachers, is available to help them, and the teachers seem to be well aware of that.

Once the boy in the corridor had gone, Mrs. Froelich remarked that she knew the boy, that he had come from Trinidad and had not settled well into the school. When asked if she knew why he was having difficulties, and she told me quite sternly that "of course" she knew. "Wouldn't you have problems if you had come . . ." She was quite right. Walking on down the corridor, Mrs. Froelich hailed everybody with a good morning, often by name, and often asking a child about relatives or a recent sickness. Mrs. Froelich will not tolerate unkindness in her school. She informed one observer that she had told a teacher who had punished a child by refusing to let him have lunch that she "considered such a punishment cruel" and that she would not defend it before the child's parents, if a problem arose. One senses that this attitude pervades the school.

Since Mrs. Froelich is convinced that the teacher is the key to the educational enterprise in schools, she takes her role as supervisor very seriously. She is careful about selecting her teachers and then proceeds to do her utmost to keep them, to keep them at the school and on their toes.

Her supervision of lesson plans (as described in the section on Reading) is basic to Mrs. Froelich as teacher trainer. While she insists that the school have a uniform approach to the reading program, she encourages the use of unusual teacher-generated experiments to enlist the children's interest. When one teacher noted in her workbook that she would like to bring animal organs to school to teach some biology and some reading, Mrs. Froelich recommended a local butcher whom she thought might—and who did—prove cooperative. At a geography lesson, she offered the teacher her collection of foreign stamps for use in the classroom as a useful means for the teaching of geography, history, and of course reading.

Mrs. Froelich always seemed to be listening for such openings, picking up sounds from open classroom doors and offering a word of advice. Passing the library, she heard a disappointed boy complaining about a vain search for a book on the

New York Mets. She checked with the teacher to see if such a book was available. Later, she brought the boy back to her office so that he could dictate a letter to her secretary asking the Mets if they could send him such a book, as well as some pictures. She elicited the words from him and he dictated with obvious relish.

Chapter 6

Principal and Parents

Mrs. Froelich believes that her greatest achievement has been to maintain good relations with parents, recognizing the connections between the school, the home and the classroom. Everybody is to be involved, and to a large extent, everybody is involved. Once again, this means tight organization, especially of the faculty.

Reading is link

The reading program is the vital link between school and parents and provides the basis for the teacher's relations with parents. When the reading program was extended to the kindergarten level, letters were sent to the parents of the kindergarten children on three separate occasions. Finally, 22 of the 26 parents replied and began to be involved. Mrs. Froelich did not give up on the four who did not answer. Neither she nor the teachers believe the widespread assumption that the parents of these children are disinterested.

One day, the observers saw Mrs. Froelich trying to explain to a parent how much this parent's efforts on behalf of the school and her own children were appreciated. The words did not seem to express adequately what was being said. Mrs. Froelich got up and kissed the woman, hugging her convincingly.

Notes to parents

Each homework assignment includes a note to the parents requiring them to listen to the child's reading and to check that each night's assignment

has been fulfilled. It is as if the parent also has to fulfill an assignment to participate in the school's reading program.

Parents are encouraged to come to school for interviews, conferences and demonstration lessons. Visits are scheduled at the parent's convenience and can be arranged after school if necessary.

Home study

Parents are shown or have sent to them materials which explain how they can help their children learn. Videotaped demonstration lessons and "live" demonstration lessons help explain differences in children's reading performance and simple home tasks are made the focus of vocabulary building outside school. Demonstration of such home-study practices are given to older siblings as well as to parents.

The home-study effort also attempts to put the weeks spent on vacation to good instructional use. Letters advise parents of places of interest to take their children and how to make use of the city's facilities.

To find out the extent to which parents were cooperating in supervising homework, an examination was made of the daily homework slips parents were asked to sign. In the heterogeneously grouped first grade classes, 85 percent signed the slip for the full assignment and 76 percent signed separately for the silent reading. In the second grade where grouping is on the basis of ability the figure approached 90 percent.

'T L C'

One final illustration of the relation between principal and parents: Mrs. Froelich was telling a very puzzled father, who spoke virtually no English, about the procedures for getting his child started at the school for the first time. The father and his young daughter seemed to be puzzled and possibly afraid of the school establishment. The school secretaries had made little progress when Mrs. Froelich intervened. Mrs. Froelich speaks only a little Spanish but she managed to make clear who she was and that she would take care of things. Within minutes a reading test had been scheduled for the child so that she could be placed in a second grade class, and a lunch was arranged for that day. Then Mrs. Froelich put one arm around the man and an arm around the daughter and took them up to the guidance counselor's room, introduced them to the counselor, who spoke Spanish, and took her leave with a friendly directive to the guidance counselor that plenty of "T.L.C." appeared to be needed. An hour or so later, the guidance counselor who was passing in the hallway playfully jumped to attention, offered a salute and said, "T.L.C. administered."

Chapter 7

Principal and Teachers

Mrs. Froelich reported that she was able to hand-pick her staff because of a long waiting list. The United Federation of Teachers representative at the school (he has been there for nine of Mrs. Froelich's ten years) admires her. In his opinion Mrs. Froelich has made it possible for new and inexperienced teachers to feel secure within well-established patterns of expectations and support. Yet, of the 51 teachers at the school when Mrs. Froelich began at PS 129, only nine remain. In this respect the school suffers from much of the teacher turnover of the typical inner city school. There were 17 new teachers in the school in September, 1969.

CCNY teacher-training

Mrs. Froelich shows a hard-headed approach to the teaching of children and the opportunities given to children to learn. In the video-room the City College teacher-training personnel were evaluating the tapes of a student teacher. They asked the principal to note how the girl had successfully followed through on a variety of routines they had identified as important to teaching: probing, following through, and so on. Mrs. Froelich assessed the lesson quickly and told them that the lesson did not appear to her to be a very good one because the teacher had done far too much talking in an attempt to satisfy her teachers, thereby reducing her pupils to passive listeners.

A sizable number of student teachers from City College choose to stay with Mrs. Froelich on regular teaching assignments. Her own teacher

education program is an ongoing process during each school day and throughout the school. The job of the assistant principal is to provide teacher training sessions for each grade level every week while Mrs. Froelich takes all the children from those classes involved into the Assembly room.

Mr. James Forrestal of CCNY supervises the City College teacher-trainees. Mrs. Froelich leaves this very much up to him, with the exception of consultations as to the best placement in accordance with the needs of the school and the College's program. He taught at PS 129 for nine-and-a-half years and it has been his experience that once Mrs. Froelich is satisfied as to a staff member's competence, she leaves that person pretty much alone. This was also indicated in this evaluation. Unlike last year, follow-up observations in this report this year followed no pre-set schedule.

The 1970 schedule called for 70 to 80 City College students at PS 129 this year—16 as student teachers and the rest divided between tutors who give an average of one hour a week and field people who give an average of two hours. Mr. Forrestal is currently trying to see that the right areas in PS 129 are given the help needed.

This means that one never sees really poor teaching at PS 129, nor a chaotic classroom. Some teachers are more exciting than others, of course, but there is a uniformity of approach within which most teachers are relaxed and interact openly with pupils—encouraging questions but not forcing them, and avoiding totally negative reinforcement. "No" or "that's wrong" were infrequent expressions in the classroom. There were a few teachers who strayed from the pattern, but these were the exception.

If there are questions about Mrs. Froelich's technique, they relate to the area of choice in the use of Mrs. Froelich's suggestions, but, as indicated, there seems to be little interference once there is satisfaction with the approach of the teacher.

Chapter 8

Other Subjects

There is an emphasis in PS 129 in every class on ethnic pride. In every classroom the black American heritage is emphasized on all bulletin boards, and Africa is the subject around which several lessons are organized at upper grade levels. Mrs. Froelich keeps a watchful eye on the progress of this aspect of the school's effort too. It is in fact a part of teacher training at PS 129.

The classroom climate to foster success in reading was to be extended to the development of math skills. The special math program began in September of 1969 as a Math Lab under the direction of a former PS 129 teacher on the faculty of CCNY. Since then, there have been changes in personnel and the definition of program in math is unclear. There have been gains in math, according to Mrs. Froelich, but the reasons for the gains have not been analyzed or explained. The program is now under the direction of cluster teachers at each grade level, but the outlines of the program are not spelled out.

Homework in math for grade 1 was started last year. The Math Lab no longer has a room of its own, but uses the music room, which was designed and is still used as a music room. The math materials are still available: dice, balance sticks, counting chips, Dienes Blocks, Tangrams, Geo Boards and Venn Diagrams in higher grades. This room however, no longer permits reinforcement of the math program through illustrations of the materials in use, or photos of how various classes work at math.

Letters from Mrs. Froelich to the children remind

them that there are words they have to be able to understand (concepts they must comprehend) if they are to make progress in mathematics. (See Figure 5) As always, children are encouraged to help each other, and as always, Mrs. Froelich injects herself into the program, making her presence ever felt. However, comparing 1969 to 1970, this year the math program seems to be receiving less attention and generating less interest.

Dear Girls and Boys,

In order to understand mathematics problems, you need to know important "math" words. Please study these and have a buddy check you.

Sincerely yours,
Martha Froelich

Number	score	smaller
larger	shaded	ruler
largest	times	inch
numerals	hundreds	dollar
exchange	tens	cents
replaced	ones	first
exactly	minutes	second
approximately	hours	third
equally	next	fourth
ahead	dozen	fifth
sum	example	one sixth
product	improved	one third
difference	square	one fourth
facts	triangle	one half

larger than	how many fewer
smaller than	most nearly
as much as	next larger
nearest in value	next smaller
from smallest to largest	

minus	−	greater than	>
plus	+	less than	<
equal to	=	not equal to	≠

Figure 5

Chapter 9

General Impressions

Schools like PS 129 need to be carefully studied. There is no obviously poor teaching nor are indifferent teachers in evidence. Reading scores are in general satisfactory. Visits, while carefully scheduled, did provide for a sampling of various kinds and levels of classes. Observations and data derived from standardized tests tell us that there is something worth further examination in the Finley School. The school produces the feeling that there is hope for public education; that public schools can be made viable for poor people.

PS 129 is one of three special service schools in Central Harlem with good standardized achievement scores. Mrs. Froelich made it clear that schools such as hers have special needs for reinforcement which have to be filled constantly. All these extra services represent an effort to compensate for past and current inequities. In Harlem, principals and teachers have to convince the children and their parents daily that schools can function so that children will perform. That is the climate Mrs. Froelich seeks to create. In so doing, as she herself noted, it might appear saccharine. But one never encounters any dishonesty at PS 129. For the people at PS 129 the overriding need apparently has been to show love and confidence enough of the time for children to believe in schooling. The positive impact of Mrs. Froelich on the children is seen in the atmosphere in the school and the reading scores.

This report describes that effort, of which Mrs. Froelich is proud. But there is more to be done. For instance, the people in the community were not

interviewed, nor were the children. Then, those teachers who chose not to stay at the school also were not interviewed. There should be a more detailed study of the reactions of teachers to the principal as educator. It is a fact that even PS 129 has serious problems of teacher turnover despite the waiting list, mentioned by Mrs. Froelich, of teachers wanting to come there to teach.

In this report, the effort made at PS 129 is viewed as positive and hopeful because the school assumes that childhood should be fun and acts on that assumption, and does not think that fun is possible without accomplishment.

How, one wonders, can what Mrs. Froelich does be reproduced by others? Are the children even in this school engaged in what seems to be a losing battle? Each year a few children from the Finley School are helped toward entrance into private schools, paid for by scholarships and sometimes supported in clothes and spending money by funds raised among the teaching staff of the Finley School. But most children go into the local junior high schools. There seems to be no readily available evidence to suggest that children from PS 129 can look forward to any better a public education experience than other poor children once they leave a school like PS 129.

All the more reason, therefore, to study, understand and encourage what goes on in PS 129.

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